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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet provides brief training pointers for supervisors. It deals with such topics as the purposes of training, a few training techniques, the situations training will not remedy, and the training supervisors themselves need. (For related documents, see Ac 014 427-429.) (KM)

NOVEMBER, 1955

VA PAMPHLET 5-18

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VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

COMMON SENSE ABOUT TRAINING

Once there was a supervisor who was in a wonderful spot:

- All his people knew—and did—their jobs perfectly.
- They never left him.
- Their work attitudes were fine.
- The job of his unit stayed the same year in, year out.
- The volume was steady.
- The procedures never changed.

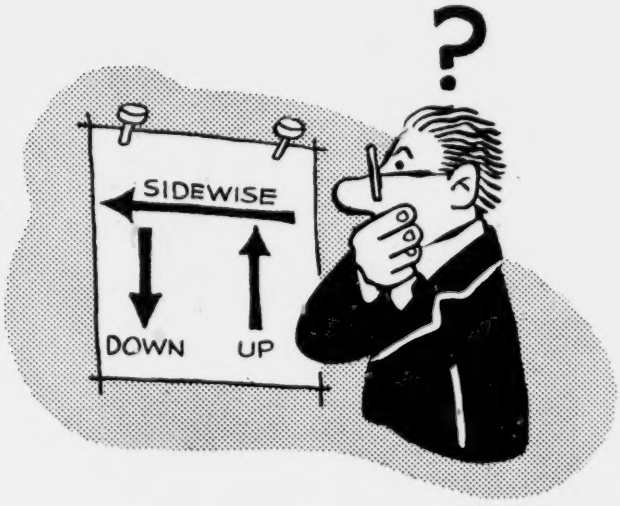
As might have been expected the work of the unit was outstanding in quantity and quality. That supervisor had no problems there!

And naturally he had no training problems either.

In fact, his only problem was finding wallspace to hold all his framed letters of commendation.

ARE *YOU* in the same happy condition as that supervisor? If so, you, too, can relax. But unless you're that one supervisor in a million, you have problems such as—

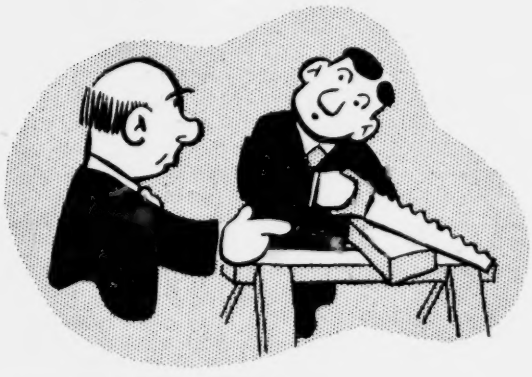
having to take on new employees who hardly know which way is up . . .



having to do new types of work . . .

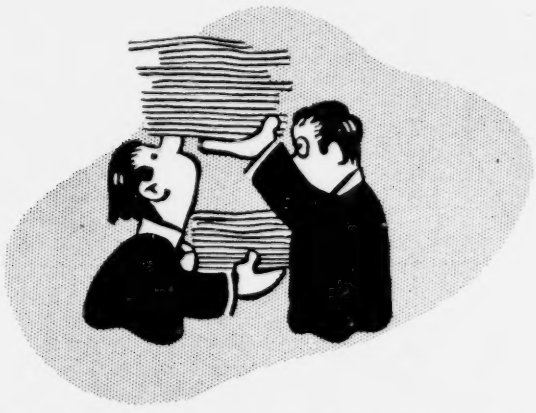
"As near as I can make it out, it says you first frammis the ortisan; then you extrapolate the nonsequitum."

getting adequate production with people who aren't sufficiently skilled in their jobs . . .



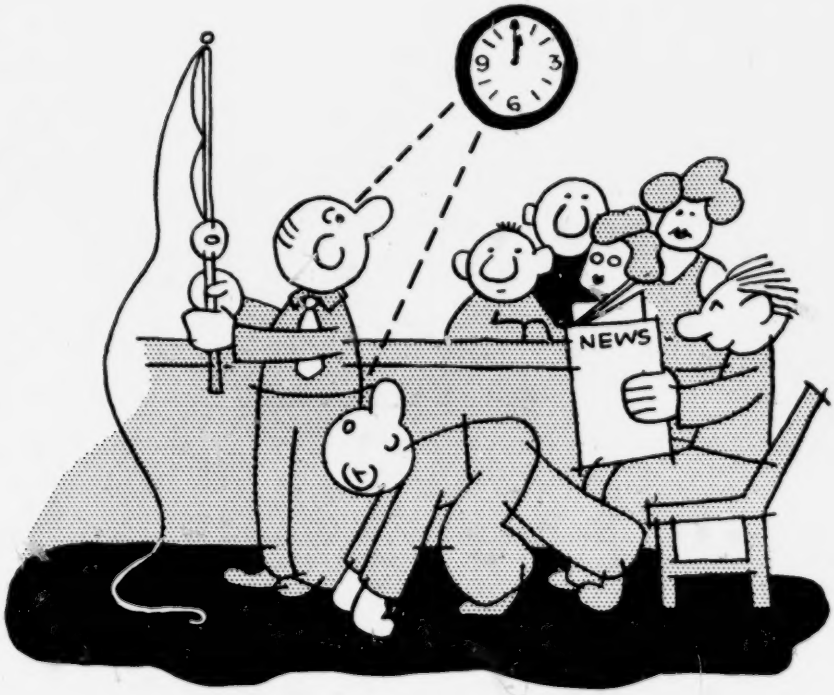
"You'll get that done a lot faster if you use the edge that has the teeth in it."

making technical changes in the way things have to be done . . .

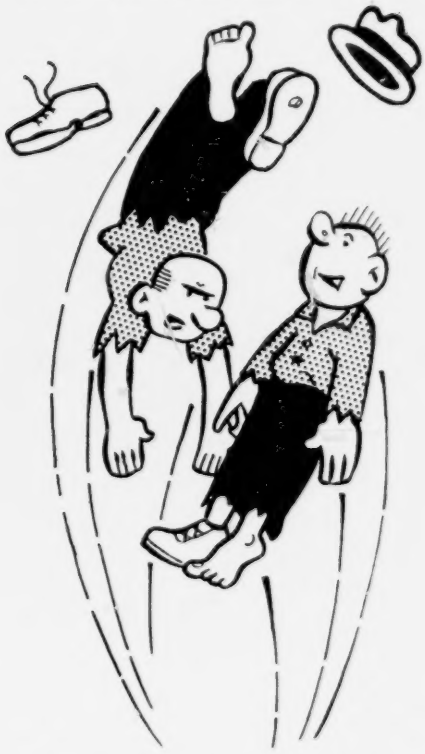


"Central Office has made a few small revisions in our procedures. Here are the change sheets."

dealing with people who have poor work attitudes . . .



preventing undesirable turnover . . .

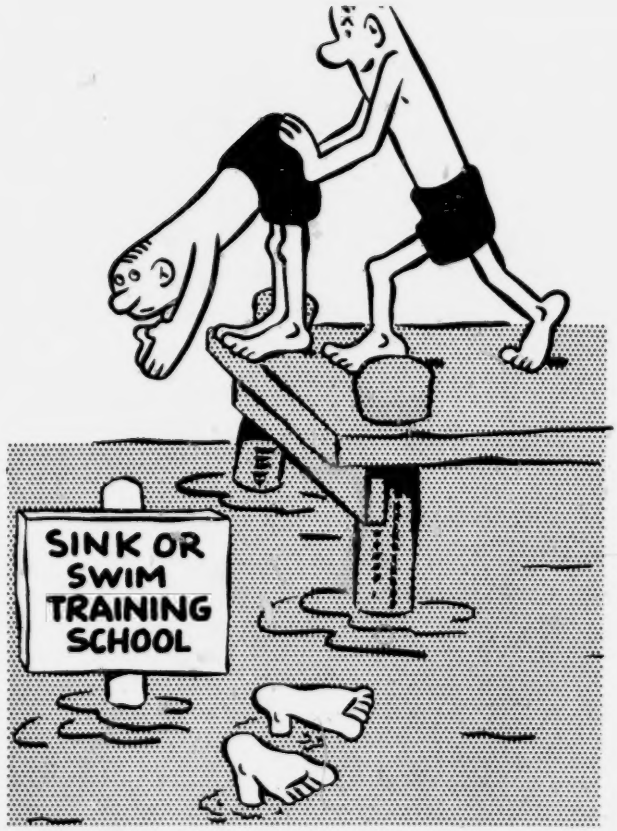


"We must have done *something* wrong in firing the boiler. I think we ought to look for a new job."

For these problems, and for many others, there is a pretty good likelihood that what is needed is

TRAINING

Training is just a matter of purposely and intelligently helping people to learn whatever it is they have to learn, instead of letting them "pick things up" by themselves. When you depend on experience to do the training, you're hiring the most expensive teacher there is—the most inefficient one, too, in many ways.



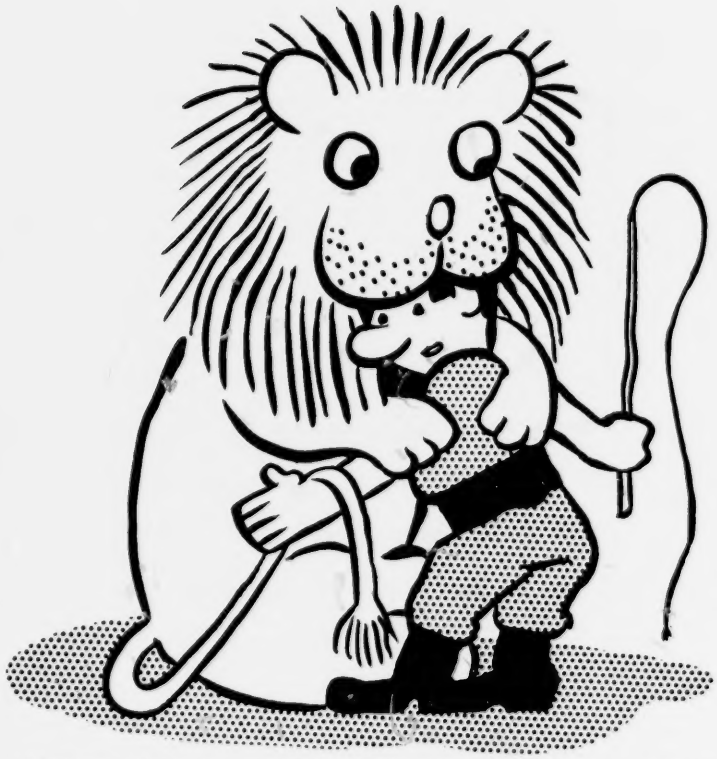
"Don't worry about a thing. Nobody who has failed our swimming course has ever come back and complained about it."

YOU THE SUPERVISOR ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR TRAINING!

And who is responsible for seeing that the necessary training is done? That's really the same question as "Who is responsible for seeing that the work of the unit is well done?" And it has, of course, the same answer:

YOU, THE SUPERVISOR

Training his people so that they can do their jobs satisfactorily is part and parcel of the supervisor's job—not something added on, but something which is completely woven into it and must be planned in advance.

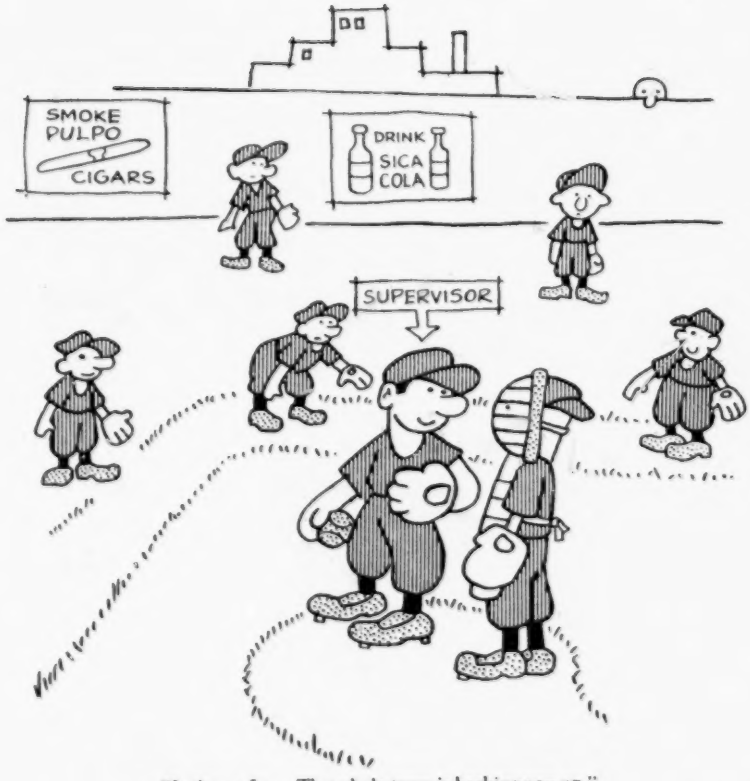


"Now that I think of it—maybe I should have given the lion some more training on what *he's* supposed to do."

BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALL YOURSELF

Of course, you don't have to do the whole job by yourself.

Your own supervisor is supposed to help you and much of the training that your unit needs may be conducted by the larger organization—section or division—of which you are a part. Some of your training workload may be shared with your fellow supervisors in other ways, depending upon what your station training committee has arranged. You will also receive assistance from your Personnel Officer.



"Let's go, Joe. The whole team is backing you up."

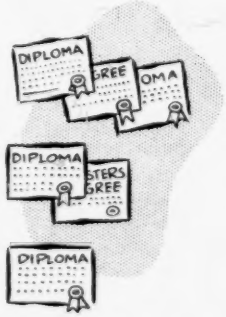
Don't let training scare you:

You don't have to be a college professor—

with three degrees,

with two degrees,

or even one degree.



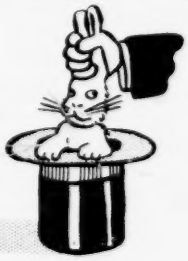
Most VA training is done "on-the-job" with individuals or with small groups. Some of it is done in "off-the-job" conference groups. It's not hard. The most important things you need to be a good trainer are—

SINCERITY

KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT YOU ARE TEACHING

Any supervisor can have those, if he really wants to. And if you have those, the rest is pretty easy.

Oh, it's true that training, like every other trade, has its tricks.



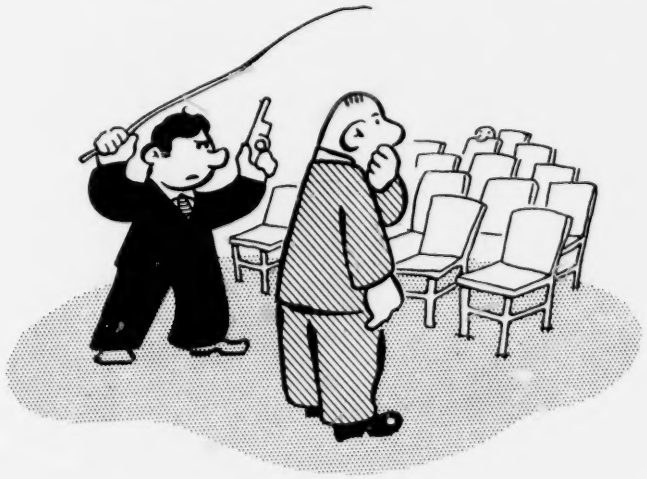
Your Personnel Officer will be glad to help you out there, if you need training in how to train, including such matters as—

the relative advantages of different approaches to training . . .

practical training techniques . . .

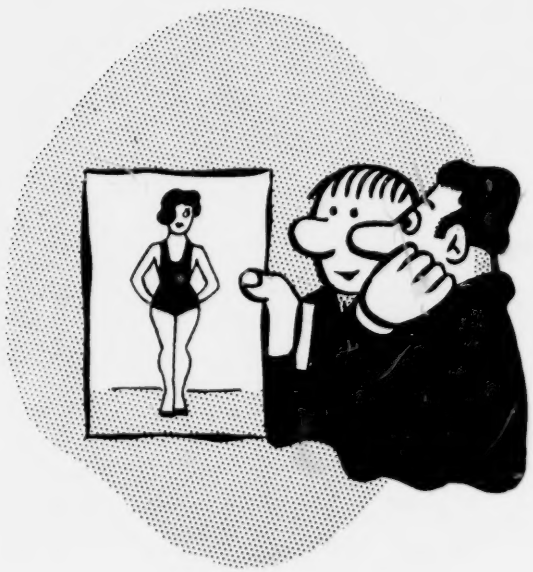
TRAINING METHODS

- ON-THE-JOB TRAINING
- WORKSHOP
- COACHING
- JOB ROTATION
- LECTURE
- CONFERENCE
- INDIVIDUAL STUDY
- OBSERVATION
- DEMONSTRATION



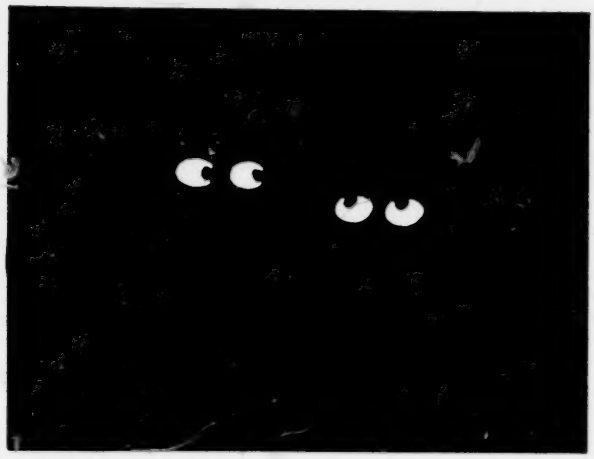
"Yes, Joe, I know that you've got to keep the people awake, but there are other ways of doing it."

use of visual aids.



"Sure, she's a pretty girl, but I still don't see how this picture can be used to illustrate your training on auditing vouchers."

Your Personnel Officer will also help you when it comes to such matters as locating adequate space and training facilities.



"No, I guess we can't put your class in this coal bin either."

REMEMBER

Having an effective, well-trained, productive group—

- increases your reputation as a supervisor
- adds to your job security
- improves your chances of promotion
- makes you more available when a promotion does come along. The supervisor who fails to train and develop his people may think he's showing that he is irreplaceable, when all that he is proving is that he is unpromotable.

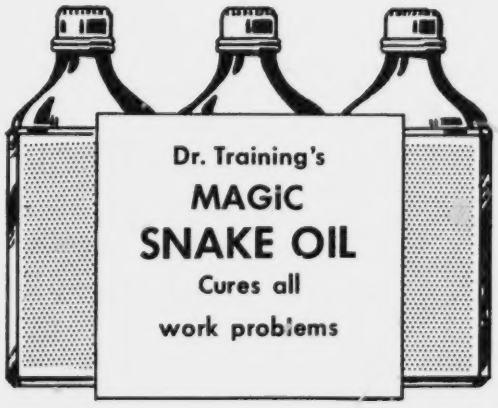
A Word of Caution

TRAINING *IS* A WONDERFUL MANAGEMENT TOOL

If you haven't really taken full advantage of it before, you'll probably get amazing results the first few times you do use it.

In the VA we believe in training.

BUT IT'S NO MAGIC CURE-ALL



It's not always the *only* answer to your work problem.
It's not always the *best* answer.
It may even be a *bad* thing to try.

Your work problems may not be the kind that can be solved by training. They may be a matter of—

POOR EQUIPMENT

"Why get a snowplow? We'll get it done this way. It will just take a little longer."

BAD METHODS

"I know it seems silly to arrange them alphabetically before you burn them, but we'll have to do what the manual says."

or "IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE"

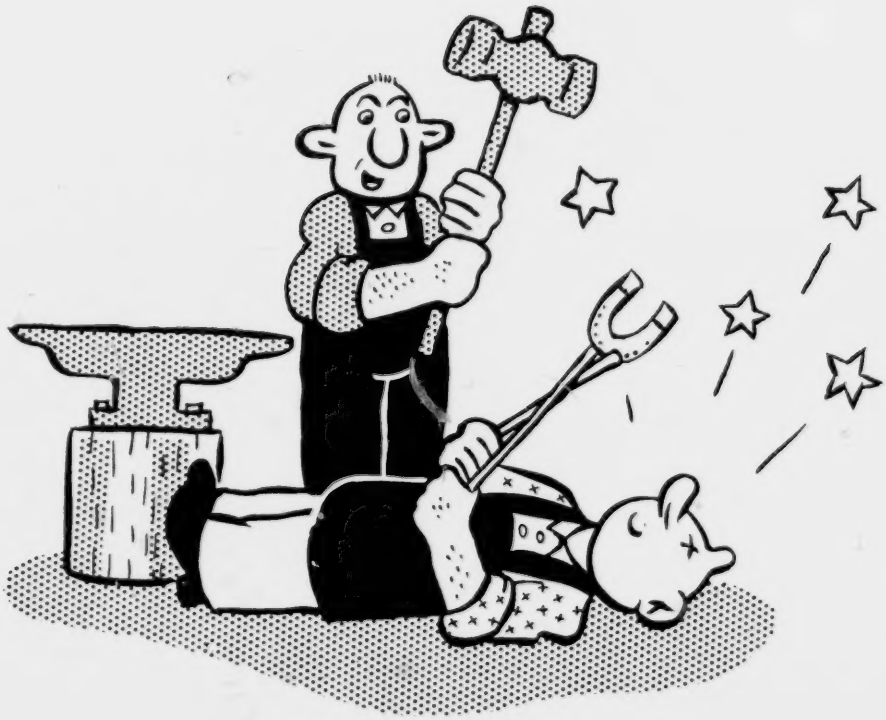
"You know, I'm beginning to wonder whether Jones is really getting much benefit from our training program."

SO . . .

- DON'T GET "TRAINING-HAPPY"!
- TRAIN WHERE THE TRAINING IS *NEEDED.*
- TRAIN WHERE THE TRAINING WILL *PAY OFF.*

Now if you're like most supervisors you've usually been pretty good about training your people in their technical functions.

You've had to do that, because if you *didn't*, the lack of training would show up immediately.

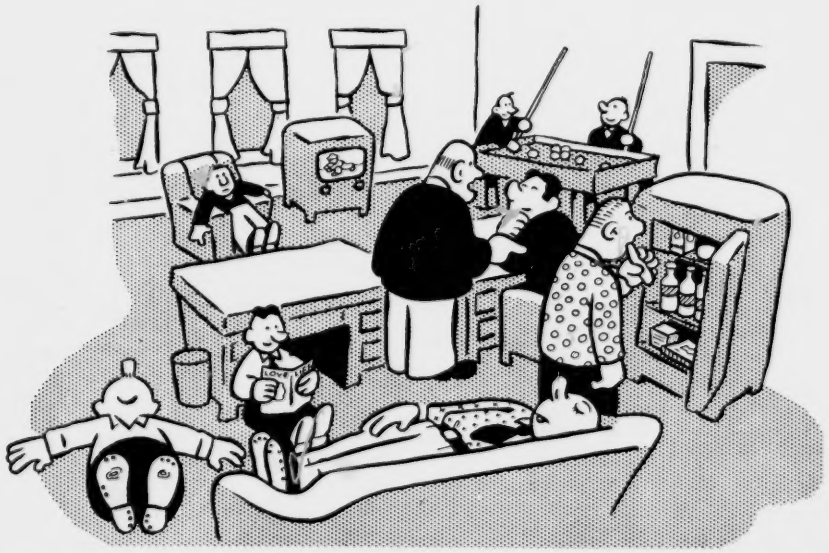


"But you said 'When I nod my head, hit it'."

You may not have been quite so interested in supervisory training either for yourself or (if you are on a higher level) for the supervisors under you.

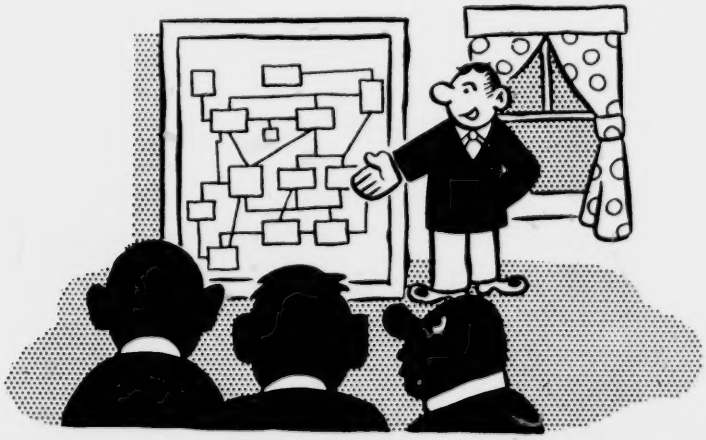
General supervisory training has to do with those skills and knowledges required in practically all supervisory positions, regardless of whether the technical function is nursing, finance, supply, adjudication, insurance accounting, or anything else. If you are a supervisor in a working organization, no matter what your particular function may be, you share with other supervisors a need to be trained in such matters as—

HUMAN RELATIONS



"Yes, yes, Jones. I know I said that an office should have a friendly atmosphere, but don't you think you're overdoing it a bit?"

EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION



"Now as you can all observe from this chart, in our organization the lines of authority and responsibility are perfectly clear."

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

"I'm afraid Dave may have misunderstood a bit what we said in that last training session about motivating employees."

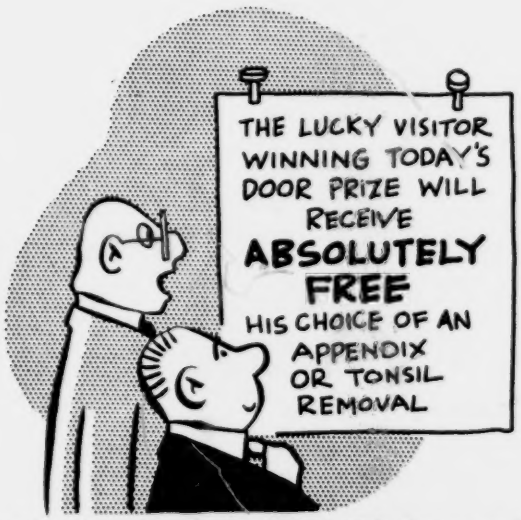
WORK PLANNING

"Well, yes, now that you mention it I would have to say that we're beginning to get a little backlog."

COORDINATION

"Why did you have to pick today of all days to repair this road?"

PUBLIC RELATIONS



"Yes, I know it would get a lot of publicity, but not good publicity."

WORK SIMPLIFICATION

"I don't care if they *do* do it that way in the South Pacific; I still want you to use the mail truck."

LET'S FACE IT

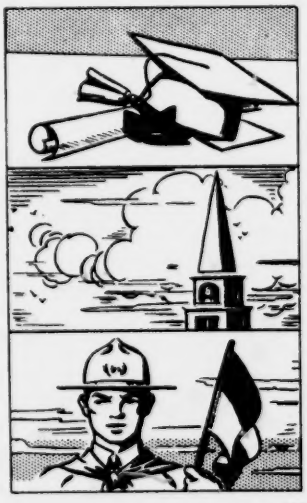
General supervisory training such as "Essentials of Supervision" and "Leadership in Supervision" doesn't pay off *immediately* the way other training usually does. It's a kind of inexpensive "preventive maintenance" that forestalls costly major breakdowns.

As with many other investments of personal effort that people make, the payoff is in the future. It's like bringing up children.

Parents struggle to give their kids a good education.

They try to give them the benefits of a religious upbringing.

They support organizations like the Boy Scouts.



They can never know exactly just *what* parts of their children's upbringing are going to produce *which* results. They do know that in doing these things they are helping their children become decent, happy, and successful human beings, and they feel that this goal makes the efforts worthwhile.

SUPERVISORY TRAINING PAYS OFF BECAUSE—

- PEOPLE WORK BEST WHEN THEY LIKE THEIR JOBS—AND GOOD SUPERVISION HAS A LOT TO DO WITH WHETHER THEY LIKE THEIR JOBS.
- WORK FLOWS MORE SMOOTHLY.
- HUMAN RELATIONS ARE IMPROVED.

  Fewer disciplinary actions.

  Fewer formal grievances.

  Fewer grievances of the type a man keeps to himself—but which are even more damaging to his work.

IT ALL ADDS UP TO BETTER PRODUCTION!

Sometimes supervisors will say, "We'd like to do more training but we have too much work to do. We just don't have time."

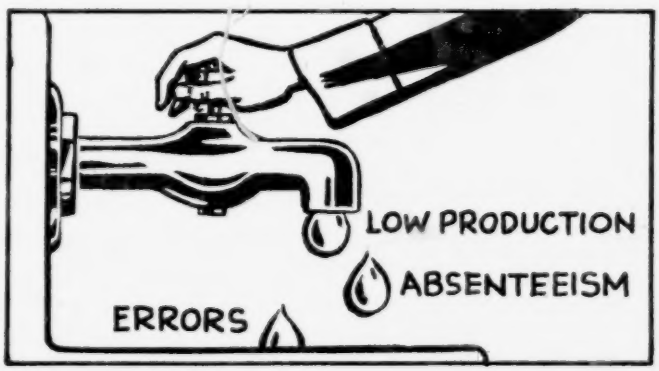
And they're certainly right, except that they'd probably get a lot more work done if they did do this training. Often supervisors "too busy to do training" are busy meeting emergencies that wouldn't have arisen in the first place if they had training.

Have you ever figured out, for instance, how much time and money a single mishandled employee relations matter can cost? Enough to pay for a division's supervisory training program many times over!

One of our hospital Managers tells a story of the way the head of a certain mental hospital used to decide in the old days whether a patient was ready to go home. He'd take the patient to a room where the floor was being flooded by a faucet that had been left open and ask the patient to mop it dry.

If the patient just started mopping up the floor—which of course didn't do much good—he was sent back to the ward.

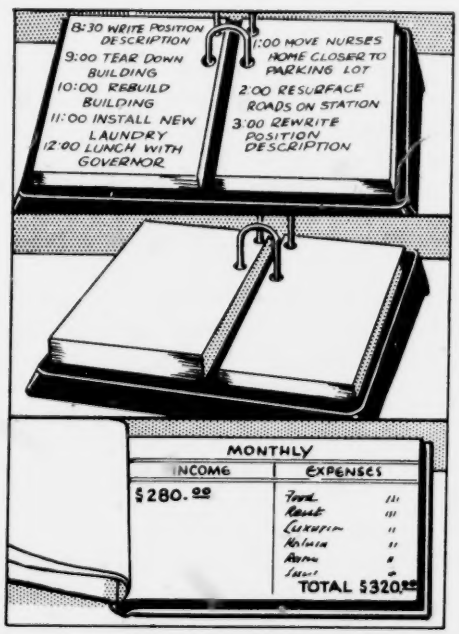
If he first shut off the faucet, he was able to get the floor dry in a few minutes. He was ready to be sent home.



TRAINING IS THE WAY YOU "SHUT OFF THE FAUCET" IN A WORKING ORGANIZATION. *THINK IT OVER:* ARE YOU TOO RUSHING UP AND DOWN, WEARING YOURSELF OUT, WHEN YOU HAVEN'T YET SHUT OFF THE FAUCET?

YOU *CAN* FIND TIME FOR TRAINING

If your work schedule for the next month is made up of days like this .



turn to where it's like this . . . . . .

SCHEDULE YOUR TRAINING FIRST—AND FIRMLY.
BUILD YOUR OTHER WORK AROUND THE TRAINING.

SCHEDULING TRAINING IS LIKE SAVING MONEY. You can't usually save much money by the technique of putting away what's left after you've taken care of "necessary expenses." If you try it that way your "necessary expenses" will usually grow—without your realizing it—to equal, or exceed, your income . . . . . .

Most people, if they are going to save successfully, have to go the other way around: First they put away what they have decided they ought to save—and then they adjust their living expenses to what's left. You can do the same thing with training: *First* decide the training you need and make out a reasonable schedule—then schedule your routine production so that you can get it done in the remaining time.

WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?

What do you do next, if you want to start training rolling in your organization—or start it rolling faster?

- If you're a Division Chief—

  (1) make a tentative analysis of your division's training needs.

  (2) talk your situation over with your Personnel Officer. He can give you a lot of good advice, and it will all be free.

  (3) work out a plan for the strictly technical training your people need. You're your own boss on that. Your Personnel Officer will be able to help you.

  (4) with the assistance of the Personnel Officer and of the Training Committee, which coordinates station training, work out a schedule for participating in other kinds of general training that your division needs.

- If you're working under a Division Chief—talk matters over with him.

- In either case you shouldn't expect to get your training done overnight or "once-and-for-all." You'll be surprised, though, at how much progress you can make if you set up a sensible schedule, one fitted to your work situation, and stick to it steadily.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR STATION MANAGERS, SERVICE DIRECTORS, AND DIVISION CHIEFS

The quantity and quality of training at your station are pretty much determined by the extent of your own personal interest and support.

It's an area where one ounce of example is worth pounds of memoranda.

This is especially true in respect to general supervisory training. To be really effective, that kind of training just about has to be given from the top down.

When the person at the higher level, e. g., the Manager or Division Chief, takes—or better still, gives—the training, he shows in the most striking manner possible that he believes the training is worthwhile and important, and he shows that he himself proposes to apply that training in the way he operates.

Nothing is more harmful than to train lower grade supervisors in principles and practices which their supervisors do not accept. They won't be able to apply their training on the job *and that's the only real criterion of good training:* Does the trainee afterward apply it successfully *on the job?*

"I don't think the old man quite goes along with what you and I were taught in that last training course."

TRAINING—of supervisors
by supervisors—

nourishes the supervisor's brain

sparks the supervisor's spirit

helps make him the kind of leader you want working with you

- An active training program is the best way to create—and the best way to maintain—an effective supervisory force and an effective station.

- An active training program, supervisory and nonsupervisory, shows *all* your employees—

  that they, the employees, are important persons whose skills are worth developing

  that their work is important

  that management is interested in bringing about high efficiency of operations

- An active training program will—

  increase station will-to-work

  lead to better communication within the station

  heighten the station's reputation

  improve the station's whole administrative "muscle-tone."

Worth working for, isn't it?

But you have to give more than "support."

YOU HAVE TO GIVE ACTIVE LEADERSHIP AND HELP

With your leadership and help your Personnel Officer and your Training Committee can make the sustained effort that is needed for effective training.

Give that leadership and help.

It's an investment that will pay big dividends—

for you

for your station

for the whole Veterans Administration.

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